MANZANAR NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Oral History Project

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NOTE TO READERS:

This transcript includes edits from the narrator's daughter Lourdes Nicholls (2021). Nicholls wished to make minor edits. Smaller edits are incorporated into the body of the transcript. Larger edits are footnoted. As a result, this is not a verbatim transcription of the audio or video interview.

INTERVIEW:

[Begin MANZ 1553_1]

RM: Today is September 14, 2019. This is Rose Masters with Manzanar National Historic Site in the home of Fumi Knox in Berkeley, California. Also in the room is Whitney Peterson who is running the video camera and taking notes. And we're here today to do an oral history interview with Fumi. The first thing I want to ask is do we have your permission to record this interview, archive it at Manzanar, and use it for educational purposes?

KF: Yes.

RM: Thank you very much.

KF: Thank you for doing it.

RM: Of course. Let's start with your mom's side of the family.

KF: Okay.

RM: We're going to start with your mom's parents. Is that okay? Your grandparents.

KF: Hm-hmm [affirmative].

RM: If you could tell me what your grandfather's name was.

KF: Okay. It was Kisaburo Konichi.

RM: And where and when was he born?

KF: Oh. He was born in, I think like, 1865 or something, in Japan.[1] I think it was Yokohama or close to there.

RM: What was his family doing for a living in Japan?

[1] LN: "Born June 25, 1865; Died May 18, 1935"

KF: Well, I heard that his family, or his father was a groom to a samurai. I guess, you know, before the Meiji Restoration.[2] But I don't know any more than that. And I don't know what my grandfather was doing. I guess he was still very young when he came here. He came in the 1890's.

RM: Oh, he did?

KF: Yeah. Is my understanding.

RM: What inspired him to make that journey across the ocean to the US?

KF: I really don't know except he did have, I think, eight brothers. And he was one of the younger ones. So it could have just been that his prospects didn't look very good.

RM: Yeah. Where did he end up landing in the US and settling down?

KF: He apparently first settled in San Francisco. And the family story is that he was there when the earthquake happened.[3] And he was so frightened by that that he walked – I mean, I guess he first got on a ferry or something over to the other side of the bay. And then he walked all the way to Sacramento. And that's where he was living when my mother was born.

RM: Okay. So let's talk about your grandmother.

KF: Right.

RM: What is her name? Your mom's mom.

KF: Her name is Chiyo Konishi.

RM: And where and when was she born?

[2] In 1868 the Tokugawa shôgun, who ruled Japan in the feudal period, lost his power and the emperor was restored to power. The emperor took the name Meiji ("enlightened rule") as his reign name; this event was known as the Meiji Restoration. It began sweeping efforts to modernize the country.

[3] The Great San Francisco Earthquake occurred the early morning of April 18, 1906. The epicenter was near the city and was approximately a 7.9 with 296 miles of the San Andreas Fault rupturing. Approximately 3,000 people died as a result of the earthquake and the subsequent fires.

KF: She was born in Yokohama in 1890.[4] Yeah. And her father was fairly well off. I think he was a whiskey, I believe, Suntory whiskey distributor in that area.

RM: Wow.

KF: Yeah. Her mother became ill and she died when my grandmother was in her early teens. Her father had brought in this *geisha*, who, I guess, you know, he was having some relationship with to first help take care of my grandmother's mother. And then after my grandmother's mother passed away, she married him. And –

RM: The woman who was the *geisha* married into the family.

KF: Yes. Right. Yeah. So my grandmother has a half-brother from that marriage. And we still are in touch with that half-brother's family. You know, grandchildren at this point.

RM: What was your grandmother's maiden name?

KF: Miyagawa [phonetic].

RM: And that was the family that was running the whiskey distribution?

KF: Yes. Yes.

RM: How did your grandmother come to marry your grandpa?

KF: I believe they were introduced. I think my grandfather went back to Japan and somehow, I don't know how, but they were introduced. Yeah. And I think, you know, it might have been a little hard for my grandmother at that point because there's now a step-mother in the house and new baby, and all. Yeah.

RM: Maybe a way to get a little bit more freedom from that situation.

KF: Yeah.

RM: Did you know your grandmother when you were growing up?

[4] LN: "Born August 23, 1890; Died January 21, 1974"

KF: Oh, yeah. In fact, she lived with us the whole time I was growing up. Yeah. From camp all the way 'til – she passed away when I was 28.

RM: What did she share with you about what it was like for her to move from Japan to the United States? It just seems like such a huge step to take.

KF: Yeah. You know, I think it wasn't so bad because – well, I'm not sure if they lived in the Japanese area in Sacramento, but I kind of think so. But then they moved to Los Angeles by 1913 or so. So maybe three years or so after my grandmother had come. And they lived right in Little Tokyo. And so there was a whole Japanese community there. And she actually never learned to speak English her whole life and she got along very well.

RM: Yeah.

KF: You know? So.

RM: Did she ever talk about what that ship journey was like?

KF: No, she didn't. I know that when she was in Yokohama, I think they really lived in the city. And apparently, she didn't cook ever. They always got their food from vendors. I guess that was pretty common when you were living in the city. And my mother used to always complain about my grandmother not knowing how to cook. But anyway, she did cook for us all the time I was growing up.

RM: Just not for your mom apparently. Would you describe your grandmother's personality for us?

KF: Gosh. She was just pretty accepting of everything. She just did everything for us. I mean, she didn't like me, in fact, to help her with taking care of the house or anything. So she cleaned the house. She washed the dishes. She did our laundry and everything. And then my mom was working like, six days a week, at one point seven days a week. And my

grandmother was really, you know, watching out for things. Like, if I needed clothes or that type of thing, it was my grandmother who would take care of it. Yeah.

RM: Did you two have a close relationship when you were young?

KF: I wouldn't say it was close. But certainly, she was almost more like a parent than my parents were because they were just working so much and away from home. Yeah. And she spoke, you know, only Japanese. I did speak Japanese when I was growing up, but I didn't know a lot of the more adult words to be able to have a real conversation with her. So.

RM: Right. Yeah. When she and your grandfather moved onto Los Angeles, and you said they were living in Little Tokyo, what were they doing for a living there?

KF: Well, my grandfather used to have a *go* parlor right in their living room.[5] And I guess it was like, a place where men would come and pretty much hang out all day and they'd bet on the games and all. And my mom said that when my grandfather died, they just found a bunch of IOUs in his desk. Yeah. So.

RM: Of men who owed money?

KF: Owed money to him. Yeah. Because he was a fairly, what do you call it, a ranked *go* player. He had gotten some kind of degree of mastery of that. And so, I guess he was pretty good.

RM: So he was beating a lot of the people who came to the parlor.

KF: Yeah.

RM: I see. Was that his business, was running the *go* parlor?

[5] Go is a board game for two players in which the aim is to surround more territory than the opponent. The game was invented in China more than 2,500 years ago and is believed to be the oldest board game continuously played to the present day.

KF: That really was. But he also used to do posters for like, community events and things. You know, they would have like, at a concert or something, they would have posters that had all the names of all the performers on them. And so he would make those in Japanese. So I guess he was a good calligrapher. Yeah.

WP: I've just got to adjust your mic really quickly.

RM: Oh, let's pause it really quickly. Yeah. I sort of saw that it slipped.

[Break in audio]

RM: Okay. We just took a very quick break to fix the mic. I was curious about what your grandparents had been doing in Sacramento before moving down to Los Angeles?

FK: All I heard was that he used to make those posters and things like that. So, yeah.

RM: Maybe that was also his –

FK: Oh. And I think he also taught Japanese some. And he did in Los Angeles too.

RM: Are you aware if your grandfather ever learned English?

FK: I really don't know. Yeah. Because he died in the '30s. So, yeah. I never met him.

RM: First of all, what's your mother's name?

FK: Her name is Chie Konishi. It was. And now it's Tsuchiya.

RM: Yeah. And where and when was your mother born?

FK: She was born in 1911 in Sacramento when they still lived up there.[6]

RM: So, they moved down to LA just when she was two years old, about.

FK: About. Yeah.

RM: Does she have sisters or brothers?

FK: She has a younger sister, Michiko. Yeah. One year younger.[7]

[6] LN: "Born September 3, 1911. They lived at 222 L Street, Sacramento."
[7] LN: "Born November 7, 1912"

RM: Where was Michiko born?

FK: I believe she was also born in Sacramento. Yeah.

RM: What did your mom tell you about her childhood and what it was like to grow up in Little Tokyo?

FK: Yeah. Well, I remember her telling me that they went to the public grammar school, Amelia Street School there close to Little Tokyo. And that the teacher wouldn't let them speak Japanese in school. They had to speak English. And then of course, her parents, especially her father, was very strict that they had to speak Japanese at home. So there was a real division.

My mother used to talk about the penny lunches at Amelia Street School. That you could get like, milk for a penny and then dessert for two pennies or something. I guess it would cost maybe five cents to have your lunch there. And there were a lot of Japanese children who went to that school. And I guess they all wanted to talk Japanese, but they weren't allowed to while they were in school.

RM: Yeah. Must have felt, sort of, caught between two worlds.

FK: Yes. Yes. And then, let's see. My mother and my aunt also used to be in these movies back in the '20s, or maybe '10s, when they were still like, maybe 10 years old or so. And they were with fairly famous Japanese actors. I don't know if they showed those films like, in Little Tokyo here or if they only showed them back in Japan. But, yeah. They were in movies that were clearly Japanese movies, you know, where sometimes their costumes would be Japanese and all. So, that was kind of interesting. They used to go out

to – where is that – Venice or West LA where the studios were. And they made those movies. We have some photos of them in those movies.

RM: Who was the production company?

FK: I don't know. I mean, we might have it in our scrapbooks. But I don't really know. I remember that she had said that like, Sessue Hayakawa who was fairly famous in the '50s and '60s, that he was an actor who was in some of the movies. So, yeah. That was, kind of, an interesting, sort of, side story to my mom's growing up.

RM: What roles were they playing in the films?

FK: Well, the one that I particularly remember is that my aunt played a sailor boy in one of the movies. And she had a little sailor outfit on. And, yeah. I think my mom was always wearing a Japanese kimono. But I don't know the roles.

RM: Wow.

FK: Yeah.

RM: Are these movies still in existence somewhere?

FK: I have no idea.

RM: We'll have to go on an archival dig to see if we can find them.

FK: Yeah. Right. Right.

RM: Was your family – or, go ahead.

FK: Oh, I was just going to say, another thing my mom used to tell me about her father – oh, he was very strict. And he would have these sessions where my mom and aunt would have to just sit very still for an hour. You know, maybe to him, it was meditation or something. But it was pretty hard on them. And then also, he really believed in the Japanese horoscope.

And whenever they wanted to go somewhere, he would read the horoscope for the day and tell them if they could go or not. Yeah.

RM: Where would that horoscope have been printed?

FK: Well, I guess in Japan.

RM: Yeah. And then it was published in like, I don't know if *Rafu Shimpo* –[8]

FK: Probably –

RM: – existed at that point. But in one of the newspapers that –

FK: Oh, no. It was a book. I mean, we still used to get it when I was young. It was for the whole year. But they had something for every day in there. Yeah.

RM: I'm unfamiliar with the horoscope book. That's interesting.

FK: Oh, yeah. They used to sell it in Little Tokyo when I was growing up. And my parents would always get one every year. They didn't really go by it very much, but they would look to see if it was going to be a good year or a bad year.

RM: Yeah. Was your mom's family religious? Did they attend church or temple?

FK: I don't think her parents did. My mother and aunt went to the Buddhist Sunday School in Little Tokyo. And like, they belonged to – what was it called? Young Buddhist Women's Association or something like that. And they went to several of the California statewide

[8] Established in 1903, the *Rafu Shimpo* is the only surviving Japanese ethnic bilingual daily in California. Under the ownership of Toyosaku Komai (Henry T. Komai) and his descendants, it has been perhaps one of the most influential print media in Japanese America since its inception. Before the Pacific War, generally representing the views and interests of urban Issei merchants and big farmers, the *Rafu Shimpo* occupied a central place in the internal politics of the ethnic community. Intended for Nisei youth, its English section began in 1926. After the wartime incarceration, the *Rafu Shimpo* had the honor of being the first ethnic publication that resumed operations on the West Coast. Since 1946, it has exerted tremendous influence over public opinion among Japanese Americans all over the continental United States and beyond. Eiichiro Azuma. "Rafu Shimpo (newspaper)," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Rafu%20Shimpo%20(newspaper) (accessed Apr 21 2021).

conferences that that group would have when they were like, I guess, past high school. Sort of, college age. Although they didn't go to college. But, yeah.

RM: Was this for this Nishi Hongwanji Church?[9]

FK: They went to the Nishi Hongwanji.

RM: Okay. Yeah. Right downtown.

FK: Right. Where I also went.

RM: Oh, really?

FK: Yeah. Yeah.

RM: Was there anything else about your mother's childhood, or teenage years that she –

FK: Gosh.

RM: Maybe, you know, I didn't ask about I'm not – I don't remember what year Nisei Week started.[10] But do you know if she participated in it in Little Tokyo?

FK: I don't think it started 'til the '30s.

RM: Was it later?

FK: Of course, I mean, I guess she would have been – no. She would have been in her 20s already by then. Yeah. They did go to the beach some. We have some photos of my mom and aunt in bathing suits and all down at the beach. But yeah, I don't remember too much else.

[9] The Nishi Hongwanji Los Angeles Betsuin has been serving Southern California since 1905. Originally located on Jackson Street, it moved to a larger building at the corner of Central and First in Little Tokyo in 1925. The building is across the pedestrian Central Avenue from the modern Japanese American National Museum and is part of their campus. The temple moved to its current location at 815 E. First Street in 1969.

[10] The first Nisei Week was held in Little Tokyo in 1934. It went silent during the years of 1942-1948, but began again in 1949 and is still held today. It was established to celebrate the achievements of the community and bring in outside shoppers to businesses in the area.

RM: That's okay. You've had a lot. Whitney, did you have questions about her mom's or grandparents' lives before I switch to the other side of the family?

WP: No, I don't think so.

RM: Okay. So let's jump over to your dad's side of the family.

FK: Okay.

RM: Let's start with your dad's dad. What is your father's dad's name?

FK: I'm afraid I don't remember his name.[11] But his mother's first name was Tameno.[12] And last name Tsuchiya. That was her maiden name as well as her married name because in my dad's family they had not had a boy in the family for seven generations until he was born. So his mother's family kept having men marry into the family and take the Tsuchiya last name. So that was the story, at least. I'm still not exactly sure how that happened because I think most people weren't able to have a last name in Japan until the Meiji Restoration. But I have also heard that some landowners could have last names. And I know they did own land in the village where he was from. Yeah.

RM: Do you recall what that tradition is called where the man marries in and takes the woman's last name in order to continue that name?

FK: I really don't.[13] I know if the family actually adopts the man, then he is called a *yoshi*.

RM: *Yoshi*. Okay.

FK: But as I understand it, my grandfather wasn't that. He wasn't actually adopted. I think my grandfather had a number of brothers also. And I think he was the youngest or something. So that was how he got married off into this other family.

[11] LN: "Kesazo Tsuchiya, 1876-1938"
[12] LN: "Born in 1873"
[13] LN: "He's called Mukoyoshi."

RM: I see.

FK: He didn't have very good prospects.

RM: That's how he met your grandma. I think I scribbled down his name, his first name.

FK: Oh, okay.

RM: Let me see if that's true. Kesazo. Does that sound correct?

FK: Oh, that sounds right. Yeah.

RM: It was in one of the things that you had donated to Manzanar from your father.[14] Yeah.

FK: Oh, okay.

RM: And to your understanding, you said they were landowners. You might not know about your grandfather's side of the family, but maybe your grandmother. What was her family doing for a living in Japan?

FK: I think, what I heard was she was collecting the rents from the property they owned there in that village. So I think that's how she made her living.

RM: What village was that?

FK: Well, we were just looking at, I think it was called Hikawa.

RM: Yeah.

FK: It was in Yamanashi-ken.

RM: Okay.

FK: Yeah.

RM: What is your father's name and where and when was he born?

[14] Between 2009 and 2014, Knox donated numerous items for Manzanar National Historic Site to scan and return to her family. They include information on the Visual Education Museum and her family history.

FK: Okay. His name was Kiyotsugu Tsuchiya. And he was actually born in December of 1899, but the government offices were all closed for New Year's. So they weren't able to register his birth until January 20, 1900. And so that date became his birthday.

RM: So he was always actually a month older than it said he was. That's very interesting.

FK: Yeah.

RM: What did your father tell you about his childhood in Japan?

FK: He apparently was really spoiled because he was the first boy in seven generations. And then his father left for America when my dad was just six years old, I think. So my dad was mainly raised by his mother and his mother's mother. Grandmother. And apparently they just spoiled him. Yeah. I mean, he didn't say specifics, but I guess he got his way in just about everything.

RM: What did he tell you about his schooling?

FK: He really didn't talk about that much. I do remember he said he remembered when the train first came to Yamanashi and it went to Kōfu which is the capital of Yamanahshi-ken. And they all saw the train for the first time. And that was really a big deal.

RM: I bet.

FK: Yeah.

RM: Wow. How old would he have been around that time?

FK: Somewhere in grammar school years. Yeah.

RM: Okay. So he was growing up without his father.

FK: Hm-hmm [affirmative].

RM: You might not know the answer to this, but was he able to correspond with his dad about what his dad's life in the US was like?

FK: I don't know if he corresponded, but I'm sure the mother corresponded with dad.

RM: And what was your grandpa doing in the United States? What brought him here?

FK: Okay. Well, I think he just wanted to, probably, get away from his wife because apparently, she was very domineering. And this other brother of my grandfather also was in America. I don't know if they came together or what. And they used to have a flower stand on Fifth and Broadway which was outside of the – excuse me.

RM: It is very loud outside, isn't it?

WP: It is. It is.

RM: Maybe let's wait just a second.

FK: Okay.

RM: Because I do want this to be recorded in a way that we can hear it.

FK: Okay.

RM: Do you mind pausing it for a sec, Whit? I think it's a garb –

[Break in audio]

RM: Okay. We are back after another quick break because a very loud truck was right outside the window. You were just telling me about your grandfather and great uncle's flower stand in LA. If you could just tell us about that.

FK: And I just know they had it there. And it was right outside of a really big department store. By the time I was growing up, I don't think it was the same department store. There was an Ohrbach's Department Store at that time. But I guess there was a lot of foot traffic right there. And, yeah. They apparently had that for 10 years or more –

RM: Oh, wow.

FK: – while he was here in America.

RM: Yeah. Where did they get flowers from in order to sell them?

FK: Gosh, that's a good question. Well actually, the flower market in LA is not that far away. It's probably within a mile. At least, it was by Ninth and Central. And they were on Fifth and Broadway. So that would have been, maybe, six or seven blocks to the east and four blocks south. So I think that's where they got it. That was a big Japanese place, the flower market.

RM: Yeah.

FK: Yeah.

RM: And what was the name of your – am I right that it's your great uncle?

FK: Hm-hmm [affirmative].

RM: What was his name?

FK: I don't know his first name. I know his last name was Horiuchi [phonetic 00:27:40] which was the same last name that my father's father had before he married into the family. Yeah.

RM: So I want to switch over to your dad's coming to the United States. Why did he decide to come to the US?

FK: Right. Well, he was actually told to come. His mother told him to come and get his father to come back to Japan. Because by this time, it was when my father was 16. So his father had been gone for 10 years. And I guess she wanted him to, you know, come back home.

RM: Had she ever expected for him to be gone that long?

FK: I don't know. I mean, there were people who came over and, you know, tried to save money and then went back years later. But I'm not sure.

RM: Okay. What did your father tell you about his journey to the US and what that was like?

FK: Gosh. I know he didn't speak any English when he came. And I know he was all alone on this boat trip to the US. But that's about all. He didn't really talk about it.

RM: And young too.

FK: 16. Yeah.

RM: Was he able to find his father?

FK: He was. So that's why I'm sure they were corresponding.

RM: But did he take his dad back to Japan after that?

FK: No. He got his father to go back to Japan. But my dad stayed. Yeah. And he stayed with the great uncle, or my great uncle, his uncle. And they traveled. I guess the uncle wanted to go to Texas to try to make money in the oil wells there. So they went, I think to Oklahoma, and then to Texas.[15] And then the uncle started like, a Japanese gift store in Texas. And then my father went on. He wanted to go to radio school. Or he wanted to take art classes. And so, somehow, he went to Chicago. I mean, there was a radio school there that he did go to. And then he went to the Art Institute at Chicago.

RM: Oh, he went to the Chicago Art Institute.

FK: Hm-hmm [affirmative].

RM: Wow.

FK: Yeah. I mean, he was taking classes there. I don't know what it was like to get into the school or anything at that time. But he was apparently taking classes there when this Mr. Harding came and was looking for someone who could help take care of his collection of medieval arms and armor and other things. And he hired my dad.

[15] LN: "Tulsa, OK"

RM: I want to get into that in just one second. I have a few questions. I'm not sure anyone in an oral history interview has ever talked about a relative going to work in the oil fields in Texas. Do you know if other Japanese Americans or Japanese immigrants were looking typically for that kind of work?

FK: I don't think he was working.

RM: Okay.

FK: I mean, I think he wanted to buy land. And he may have bought some land. I remember my father saying that it didn't work out because, you know, the bigger oil company would set up a well right in the adjoining land. And they'd get to the oil faster and be able to take out the oil before his uncle was able to. So he wasn't able to make any money there.

RM: I see. But he was prospecting, basically.

FK: Yeah. Right.

RM: Wow. That's really – that's unique.

FK: Oh.

RM: Yeah. And what city did he set up that gift shop in?

FK: I don't know.

RM: That's all right. Had your father – or maybe let me put it this way. Why was your father interested in art?

FK: He was fairly good as an artist. I mean that's, I guess, why he was interested in it.

RM: What kind of art did he do?

FK: You know, I just remember him making some sketches. Like, he made one of me when I was very young. And you know, maybe scenery and that kind of thing. Yeah.

RM: And so was he studying drawing? Printing –

FK: Drawing, I think. Yeah.

RM: – at the Art Institute?

FK: Hm-hmm [affirmative].

RM: Okay. Tell me more about Mr. Harding and his museum.

FK: Yeah. So George Harding lived in Hyde Park in Chicago and was a real estate developer, I guess. And his father had been also. Was very wealthy. In fact, we've met some of the descendants of the Harding Family who, apparently, they were decedents of George Harding's siblings. And there was a divorce between George Harding's father and mother. And these descendants said the only one that sided with the father was George Harding. And the other siblings all sided with the mother. And so they didn't get anything, supposedly, from the fortune. But George inherited it all. That was their story, at any rate.

And so George was very wealthy. He had this house in Hyde Park. And he built onto it a little castle tower and had a moat around it that looked, you know, like a medieval castle. And in this structure, he kept all his collection of the, it was primarily medieval arms and armor. But he also had a lot of musical instruments. You know, old musical instruments. And he even had a whole collection of walking canes from a long time ago. I'm not sure when. But a lot of things, paintings and so-forth.

RM: Where was his house in Hyde Park?

FK: Would that have been Lake Park Drive?[16] It's a street that's gone now because they did some redevelopment. It was right close to the lake, I believe. Maybe on the lake side of the railroad tracks or something. And yeah, they redeveloped it in the '50s.

[16] LN: "4853 Lake Park"

RM: And the house is not there anymore?

FK: The house was torn down. Yeah.

RM: I see. Why did George Harding recruit your father specifically?

FK: Well, I think he was looking for a younger person. I believe he had an older Japanese man working there already. And I guess he wanted a helper for the older man. From what my father had said, the older man was kind of an alcoholic and got fired very soon afterwards. And so then, my father became the main curator and caretaker of the collection.

RM: Now, you said your father came to the US, didn't know any English at that point. What was that process like for him learning English?

FK: I have no idea. But he learned it very well. I mean, he spoke English better than my mother who went to the public schools in Los Angeles growing up. So I don't know how he did it.

RM: He was skilled with language. Yeah.

FK: Yeah. I guess so.

RM: Yeah.

FK: And he taught himself a lot. You know, he would read and –

RM: Hm-hmm [affirmative].

FK: Yeah.

RM: And what specifically was his job for Mr. Harding?

FK: Well, he was called a curator. And I guess in some sense he was because this George Harding would go to Europe and buy whatever he could buy of medieval arms and armor. And then, you know, would have some story about whatever he bought, I guess. But my

dad would verify it and, you know, make sure where it came from, how old it was, and that type of thing. Yeah.

RM: It was a private museum?

FK: It was a private museum. They used to let people from the public in from time to time. Like, there were schools that would go to visit. We have some letters from children and teachers who went to visit that museum thanking my father. And there are stories that were in the Chicago newspaper about the museum. So I guess there were ways to get into it. Now, after my father left and George Harding had died, they did open it to the public because it was, sort of, left to the public as I understand it.

RM: I see. Are you aware, just out of curiosity, where all of those artifacts are today?

FK: Well, I don't know about all of them. But definitely the arms and armor are at the Chicago Art Institute now.[17]

RM: They are.

FK: Yeah. And they have a pretty big display of several rooms of that arms and armor now, including two, you know, what do you call it? People, not people, but dummies on horses with the arms and armor on them. And other mannequins, I guess, you'd call them. Mannequins, they're standing and pretending to fight or start to fight with the armor on them.

RM: Wow.

FK: So, yeah. It's quite a big deal there.

RM: And so you can go and see the collection that your father curated.

FK: Yes.

[17] LN: "Lots at the Art Institute."

RM: That's incredible.

FK: Yes. In fact, that's when we met the decedents of George Harding's family, you know.

RM: What was the Japanese American community in Chicago like during the time your father was curating this museum?

FK: I think it was pretty small. I know my father had one friend, Fred Uno [phonetic] who was a cook at wealthy people's, you know, homes. But other than that, I don't think he really had any Japanese friends. There's a big community, a Japanese community now in Chicago. But I think most of them went there after the war.

RM: Right. Yeah.

FK: Yeah.

RM: Big resettlement location –

FK: Right.

RM: – from the camp. Sure.

FK: Right. And in fact, well speaking of there being no Japanese, my father apparently had, a German girlfriend in the '30s. And his uncle from Texas came to visit him in the mid-'30s and saw that he had this German girlfriend and said, "Well, this won't – this isn't right. You have to have a Japanese wife." And so his uncle went back to Los Angeles where he apparently knew a lot of people in Little Tokyo because he had lived, you know, right by there for so many years. And found my mother. And introduced them. And so they basically had an arranged marriage. They only met once before they got married. That was in like, July of 1936. And then my dad went back to Chicago. And then he came out for the wedding in December of '36. Yeah.

RM: So if he hadn't had that German girlfriend to make your uncle unhappy, perhaps your parents would have never met.

FK: Right. Right.

RM: You said they only met once.

FK: Hm-hmm [affirmative].

RM: Did your father or your mother ever tell you what they thought of each other at that first meeting?

FK: Well, I think they thought the other person was suitable. And then we do have letters from my dad to my mother during that five or six-month period. And you know, it seemed like he was pretty smitten. He, you know, was talking about the apartment they would have and everything, you know, that he wanted it to be nice for her and all, so. Yeah.

RM: What was the date of their wedding?

FK: It was December 7, 1936 which was five years before Pearl Harbor. So that was always, you know, a date that had mixed feelings for our family. Yeah.

RM: No kidding. Yeah. They weren't able to celebrate their wedding without a lot of other things attached to it. Sure.

FK: Right, right.

RM: Sure. Wow. Where did they get married?

FK: They got married in Little Tokyo.

RM: Okay. And was it in a church, or?

FK: You know, I'm not sure. They had a Japanese wedding which I think was Shinto.[18] And it seemed to have been on a Monday as far as we can tell. You know, when we've looked

[18] Shinto is a religion which originated in Japan. Classified as an East Asian religion by scholars of religion, its practitioners often regard it as Japan's indigenous religion and as a nature religion. There is no central authority in

back to see what day of the week was December 7th of 1936. So I don't know that it was in a church.

RM: Okay. And after that they moved directly to Chicago?

FK: Hm-hmm [affirmative]. Because my dad was still living there. Yeah. They took the train.

RM: Had your mom been out of California before that?

FK: No. Never.[19] And my dad had, for part of the time, while he was working for George Harding, he had lived in the house of George Harding where there were maids and cooks and chauffeurs and all this. So he had, sort of, learned very formal American etiquette and that type of thing. And it was all new to my mother. And I guess my dad used to be, kind of, upset that she wasn't more familiar with, you know, things like setting the table correctly and making American dinners and all. So, yeah. They had a lot of adjustment to make.

RM: That's interesting because it sounds like she knew very formal Japanese etiquette, being taught by her father.

FK: Yes, yes.

RM: Yeah. You know, we hear a lot about prejudice in California against Japanese Americans. Had your mother or your grandparents, to your understanding, faced any prejudiced when they were living there?

FK: Well, you know, because they were in Little Tokyo, I think they were somewhat sheltered from that. The main thing I remember is her talking about the teacher in grammar school not letting them speak any Japanese. But, yeah. I don't recall her talking about that.

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control of Shinto and much diversity exists among practitioners. Prior to the end of WWII, Shinto was also the state religion of Japan and held the emperor as divine. The separation of church and state was enacted during the occupation.

[19] LN: "Yes, she went to Japan in the 1930s."

RM: And then in Chicago, with such a small Japanese American population, are you aware if your father faced any discrimination while he was there?

FK: Not generally. But my parents did try to open a Japanese restaurant at one point in the late '30s, I guess. And my mother said that there was some kind of incident between Japan and America right after they opened the restaurant. And that instantly, all of the customers disappeared. That they didn't have any business. And they had to close it. Yeah.

RM: What neighborhood were they living in, or trying to open the restaurant?

FK: I think it was in Hyde Park. I can't remember. But we do have a menu from that restaurant. So I think we could probably find out.[20]

RM: It sounds like your family has been able to archive or hold onto a lot of documents.

FK: They did. It's just amazing. I think they stored it at the Buddhist Church in Los Angeles during the camp experience.

RM: Wow.

FK: Yeah.

RM: You said in the letters that your father wrote to your mom, he was talking about planning their new apartment. That was also in Hyde Park at that point?

FK: Yes.

RM: Okay. Am I missing anything from Chicago, their years in Chicago? Oh, yes. Do you have any siblings?

FK: Yes. My sister was born June 6, 1940. So they were still in Chicago at the time.

RM: What's your sister's name?

[20] LN: "It was called Koyo at 5253 Cornell in Hyde Park, Chicago."

FK: Her name's Kieko.[21] And I was just going to say that my father also, when he was working for Mr. Harding, had been able to ride on an airplane with him. I don't think to Europe, but at least to New York on one of the buying trips. And so the – Harding, you know, had an airplane. And it was pretty unusual back in those days. Yeah.

RM: No kidding. Yeah.

FK: Oh. There had also been a lot of politicians and other people of notoriety, like, including Al Capone, apparently, that came to se the museum. And my dad had a signature book that included a signature of Al Capone.

RM: Your father met Al Capone?

FK: Yeah.

RM: How weird.

FK: I know.

RM: Yeah. It sounds like he was moving in a very unusual circle.

FK: Yes. Yes.

RM: Do you know whether your sister was born in a hospital or at home?

FK: Oh. I'm sure she was born in a hospital. But I don't know the name.

RM: Whitney, do you have questions about Chicago and Japanese American community in Chicago? Okay. You mentioned that Mr. Harding died. Do you know what –

FK: Yes.

RM: – year that would have been?

FK: I believe it was 1939 to 1940.[22]

RM: And how did that change your parents' life when he passed away?

[21] LN: "Born June 25, 1940 exactly 75 years after her grandfather Kisaburo Konishi."
[22] LN: "April 1939"

FK: Well, I think my dad stayed on for awhile at the museum. But there was a big fight about the estate because Mr. Harding had divorced, I believe, before that. And so it was his family verses his mistress who had also been living at the house and was also like, acting as a secretary and something. And he had named the mistress as the trustee in charge of the collection which was, I guess, his main asset, or at least one of the big ones at that point. And there were court battles about who that should belong to and all. So it got pretty ugly at the house. And my father left. I don't know if he was fired or decided to leave.[23]

And my parents had been hearing from my father's brother-in-law, married to one of his sisters, who that couple had moved to Manchuria before the war. And he was working on the railroad or something and kept telling my dad it was a wonderful opportunity there. There were so many – you know, business was booming. And of course, they were apparently, really treating the Manchurians very poorly. It was great for the Japanese, I guess, but not for the Manchurians. But so my dad had sent a lot of money over to his brother-in-law to save for him there. And my parents were going to go and move to Manchuria after my sister was born.

RM: In 1940.

FK: Right. So in late 1940, they went to Los Angeles on their way to Manchuria and they wanted to see my mother's mother and her sister, you know, and say goodbye. And then when they got there, the Japanese community there said, oh, this is really a bad time to go to Japan. And you shouldn't go because you might not be able to come back if you go at this time. So just wait until things settle down more. And so they waited. I guess they

[23] LN: "May 20, 1940 Jessie Katz (the mistress) wrote a nice letter of recommendation for him."

waited about six months. And nothing was happening. So then my dad started this nursery in Culver City. And they were running that nursery when Pearl Harbor happened. Yeah.

RM: In one of the papers that your father – I believe it's an interview with Morris Opler at Manzanar, one of the ones that I brought over.[24] He talks about wanting to get back to see his mom in Japan because she was ill.

FK: Yes.

RM: Did you hear anything about that? And it was, sort of, heartbreaking to read it because he said, "I haven't heard. I don't know if she's still alive or not." Do you know what happened there?

FK: I know after the war, you know, and that may have been part of the reason he took the job with the US Army was so that he could go back to Japan. And I think he did see her once. But then he had to come back here. And by the time he went back, she had passed away. So.

RM: But she had lived through the war then?

FK: She had lived through the war. Yeah. One of his sisters had died in the war. But another younger sister had also lived through the war.

RM: How many siblings did your father have?

[24] As community analyst at Manzanar, Morris E. Opler (1907–96) cogently documented various aspects of life there with great sympathy for the incarcerated Japanese Americans. He also ghost wrote two key legal briefs for the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) in the *Hirabayashi* and *Korematsu* Supreme Court cases. He enjoyed a long and distinguished academic career after the war mostly at Cornell University, with a lifelong specialization on the Apache peoples. Brian Niiya. "Morris Opler," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Morris%20Opler (accessed Apr 21 2021).

FK: I think he had three sisters.[25] But now I don't remember. Maybe it was the third sister that died. And the second one, I think might have been the one who was in Manchuria at one point. But he was back in Tokyo when we went to Japan in the late '40s. Yeah.

RM: Tell me about your parents' nursery. I know it was a short-lived business. But about their nursery in Culver City.

FK: Yeah. And I'm not sure if he bought the nursery from someone, or it was already running, or if he actually started it. I thought he started it. But it looked like it was pretty well developed by, you know, late 1941. It was called The Garden Nursery. It was on Washington Boulevard in Culver City.[26] It had a little fish pond in the nursery. And I know that, you know, when they had to go to the camps, he said that he couldn't sell it to anyone. He finally sold it to the milk man for $75.

RM: The whole nursery for $75?

FK: Yeah. Yeah.

RM: Who had been his customers at that nursery?

FK: I assume people in the neighborhood. Yeah.

RM: Your father had studied radio, art, had curated a museum, and now he was running a nursery in California. How did he learn how to do that?

FK: I don't know except that he used to read a lot and teach himself things. I don't know.

RM: Okay. What stories were passed down in your family about your parents' experience of December 7, 1941, their fifth wedding anniversary, as you said before.

FK: Right.

RM: How did they react? What was –

[25] LN: "Kimiyo, Masayo, and Momoyo"
[26] LN: "11928 Washington Blvd."

FK: I know they were really scared. And my mother especially. I guess they heard from my grandmother what was happening to the people in San Pedro and even also leaders in Little Tokyo were being rounded up the first few days after Pearl Harbor.[27] [28] And the one story I keep remembering is that my mom was worried about my dad's scrapbooks with those signatures in them. And he also had some Japanese swords that, I guess, he had collected while he was in Chicago. And she made him throw all of those in the fish pond at the nursery because she was so afraid that the FBI or whoever would come and find them and then say he was conspiring with the Japanese or something.

RM: Right.

FK: Yeah.

RM: Including the signature from Al Capone?

FK: Yeah. I don't know exactly, other than the fact that he was a criminal.

RM: Yeah.

FK: So maybe that's why she was worried about it. But, yeah. That was –

[27] San Pedro is the town on the mainland that supported the community on Terminal Island. Terminal Island is the location of a Japanese fishing village in the Port of Los Angeles whose residents were the first to be evicted from their homes less than a week after the signing of Executive Order 9066. Most men from Terminal Island were taken by the FBI because as fishermen they had access to fishing boats and short-wave radios. This left their wives and children alone to contend with being removed from their homes in 48 hours in February 1942 with nowhere to go. The community was removed entirely and no one was able to return after the war. Lilian Hoffecker. "Terminal Island, California," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Terminal%20Island,%20California (accessed Apr 21 2021).

[28] During World War II, the FBI investigated and arrested selected Japanese residents in the U.S. after the attack on Pearl Harbor and monitored and investigated Japanese Americans throughout the war. Through their custodial detention program, the FBI worked with the ONI and army to put together custodial detention/ABC lists of those to be detained in event of war. On December 7, Hoover authorized the FBI to arrest and detain all those on the ABC lists regardless of classification. The FBI also engaged in conducting warrantless random raids of Japanese American homes in the weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Brian Niiya. "Federal Bureau of Investigation," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Federal%20Bureau%20of%20Investigation (accessed Apr 21 2021).

RM: Do you know if there were any long-time family heirlooms or photos or anything that got tossed in the fish pond with the swords your dad had collected?

FK: I don't think so because we have all these photographs from the 1890's. And then the things my grandmother would have had, she would have had them with her in her house. Because she had some old kimonos from Japan and that type of thing.

RM: And something that we mentioned but I didn't ask about was that your grandfather, your mom's father passed away in the '30s.

FK: Yes.

RM: What happened, just to, sort of, follow up with that side of the family? Was that before or after your mother was married?

FK: It was before she was married. Yeah. It was maybe a year or – yeah. About a year, I think before she was married. And I know my mother and grandmother went back to Japan with his ashes at that time after he died.

RM: Your mother's sister, Michiko, what was she doing during this time?

FK: Okay. She was working in Little Tokyo at a stationary store there that was restarted after the war. I remember going to the store. Tayodo [phonetic 00:59:09]. Yeah. So we knew the family whose name I can't remember now.

RM: It's okay.

FK: But, yeah. My mother, before she got married, I believe had been working at a doctor's office as a receptionist.

RM: Okay. And did your parents own or lease the house? Or where were they living –

FK: Where they were living.

RM: – in Culver City?

FK: They were living at that nursery. And I think they must have been leasing it. Yeah. Well, he wasn't able to buy land, so.[29] Well, of course, she could have. But I'm sure they were leasing it. Yeah.

RM: Why don't we take a break? It's been an hour.

FK: Okay.

RM: And we'll just stop and then we'll start up where we left off.

[Break in audio]

RM: We are back with part two of an oral history interview with Fumi Knox. We had just talked about the experience of Pearl Harbor for your mom and dad and your older sister. You said that they had, sort of, thrown things in a pond in, out of fear that your dad might be picked up by the FBI. What happened in those months following that point, and when they were forced to go to Manzanar?

FK: Yeah. I think my dad just tried to sell as much as he could from the nursery. And then finally, before they were leaving, he said he'd finally sold the nursery to the milk man for $75. They didn't talk that much about things, you know, the way I've heard some like, farm families and all. And maybe it was because they had already packed up from Chicago. And they probably didn't have that much with them in Culver City.

RM: Because they had just moved.

FK: Right. Right.

[29] Alien land laws are most often associated with western states' attempts to limit the presence and permanence of Japanese immigrants from 1913 through the end of World War II by forbidding "aliens ineligible for citizenship" from purchasing, and later from leasing property in the states in which these laws were passed. The total list of states that passed alien land laws or that contained restrictions against aliens ineligible for citizenship owning property in their state constitutions included Arizona, Arkansas, California, Florida, Idaho, Louisiana, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Alien land laws were ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1952. Cherstin Lyon. "Alien land laws," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Alien%20land%20laws (accessed Apr 21 2021).

RM: Yeah. How about the travel restrictions or the curfew that was placed on Japanese Americans? Did your parents ever mention that to you?

FK: They really didn't. Yeah.

RM: Okay. What about your grandma Chiyo and your aunt Michiko, what happened to them during this period and their home?

FK: I really don't know. You know, I don't know.

RM: Yeah.

FK: I thought perhaps they were, you know, a little more protected because my aunt worked in Little Tokyo. And I'm sure there were a lot of Japanese in East LA where my grandmother and aunt lived, so. Yeah.

RM: You know, your mom was born in Sacramento. She's from California. And yet, this was being done to her and her family. Did she tell you how she processed the news that she was in, you know, your sister and your dad and your grandma and aunt were all going to be forced to leave home and go to Manzanar?

FK: Yeah. You know, she just said that, well, they had to do it. There wasn't any choice. It was, kind of, that saying of *shikata ga nai*. You can't do anything about it. So they don't feel too much emotionally about it is what it seemed like. You know, she never also seemed to be particularly angry about it the way my aunt was. My aunt seemed to realize the injustice of the whole thing and talked about it, you know, later when I was growing up.

But the one thing my mom did that always struck me was when I was starting kindergarten. She said, "Now, if anybody asks you where you were born" – and I always start to cry

when I say this. But she said, "You tell them, you were born at Manzanar Relocation Camp in Inyo County." That it was like, she wanted to emphasize that and make sure it wasn't forgotten. And she didn't say just to say Manzanar, California. Or, I don't know why you would say that to your child when she's about to go to kindergarten anyway, about where they were born. But I remember that made me, for a long time when I was asked, you know, on a form or something, where was I born? I didn't realize I could just say Manzanar. And I always thought, oh, I have to write Manzanar Relocation Camp. And that always seemed so weird. But, anyway. It was sort of, the one act – I mean, it wasn't really defiance, but it seemed like, definitely she wanted to make a point of that.

RM: Do you think that point was for your teachers or whoever was asking you?

FK: I think so. Yeah.

RM: Yeah.

FK: Yeah. But see, for my mother, I think the camp experience wasn't too hard because here she had been in Chicago for five years with no friends and no Japanese around. And now she was there at the camp with a whole community, many of her girlfriends from school, and, you know, Japanese. And very much, the culture was there. So for her, it wasn't so bad. And then she had my grandmother now to help take care of my sister. So I think that's partly why my mother wasn't as angry about it.

RM: So tell me about that trip for your family. Do you know where they got on busses or a train to go to Manzanar?

FK: No. But I know they went straight to Manzanar. They didn't go to one of those centers at the racetracks.

RM: Right.

FK: And my mom said they volunteered to go because they thought they would be treated better if they volunteered.[30] So I think they got there in April.

RM: So they went early on.

FK: Yeah.

RM: Yeah. I was curious because most of the people who lived in Block 20 were from Little Tokyo.

FK: Oh, were they?

RM: Hm-hmm [affirmative]. And your parents and sister had been living in Culver City. But had your grandma and aunt still been living in Little Tokyo at that point?

FK: No.

RM: Okay.

FK: They were in East LA.

RM: Okay.

FK: I mean, close to Little Tokyo. But maybe because of their friends they were able to live there. Yeah. Because didn't Toyo Miyatake live there?[31]

RM: Also Block 20. Yeah.

FK: Hm-hmm [affirmative].

RM: Yeah. What was told to you about that trip to Manzanar? Or, first impressions of the camp when they got there?

FK: Oh, gosh. They did talk about the mattresses, having to make their mattresses out of the straw. And then my mom just said how it was so dusty. That that dust blowing all the time

[30] LN: "FBI agent told my grandfather that Manzanar was the best place to go."
[31] Toyo Miyatake (1895-1979) was an Issei photographer and leading figure in Los Angeles's Little Tokyo arts community who became the official photographer of the concentration camp at Manzanar. Sharon Yamato. "Toyo Miyatake," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Toyo%20Miyatake (accessed Apr 21 2021).

was really hard. And then she said the food was so terrible that they had lard with food coloring to make it look like butter. You haven't heard that from anybody else? I've heard that from other people. And they did something with the rice. Anyway, it was like there was some attempt to, you know, at least to give white rice. But there was something wrong with it. Either it was in a sauce or something. So, yeah. She was pretty disappointed in the food.

RM: What were they able to take with them?

FK: Just what they could carry. We do still have suitcases. Or, not suitcases. But we have at least one suitcase that they used with my dad's name on the side. Yeah.

RM: But not a lot.

FK: No.

RM: Yeah. Do you know what your grandmother was able to bring with her?

FK: No.

RM: Okay. I don't want to ask you too many detailed questions about Manzanar. I know that you were only there for a very short time.

FK: Right.

RM: But your father started a really important thing in Manzanar. I'm wondering if you could tell us about what your dad did there.

FK: Right. He started what was called the Visual Education Museum. And I think what was wanted was a museum so that the children would know about the outside world is what I was told, anyway. But it sounded like, at first, they collected a lot of things from Manzanar and the area around it. You know, little animals and Indian artifacts and that kind of thing.

But then they started to have these exhibits once a month there that, I guess, were pretty well attended with, you know, they would have like, displays of things that the community members had made, or things about like, they had a relocation week which was, I think about how to relocate to the outside and that type of thing. So various different subjects. They also had an exhibit of Ansel Adams photographs. Because Ansel Adams had taken a lot of photographs there. They had like, a flower exhibit where the women could display their flower arrangements. So, yeah.

RM: Why did your father found the museum? Do you know how it came to be?

FK: Well, he was asked to do that by somebody, you know, in the administration of the camp.[32] And I guess it was because he had, you know, been a curator of a museum before. But I think he may have picked that name because he knew it wasn't a museum of some wonderful collection of art or whatever. And so he thought maybe it could just educate people by what it could display. Yeah.

RM: Yeah. It's funny you say that because today, if we could walk inside of that museum, it would be a museum of a wonderful collection of art. He pulled together so many extraordinary artists who were incarcerated in Manzanar.

FK: Oh.

RM: You had mentioned one earlier, Kango Takamura.[33]

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[32] LN: "Ralph Merritt"

[33] Kango Takamura (1895-1990) was an Issei artist. In 1941, he was working as a photo retoucher for RKO Studios in Los Angeles when Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese Imperial Navy. Takamura was arrested and detained by the FBI in 1942. During World War II, he was incarcerated at an internment camp at Santa Fe, New Mexico, for several months and then moved to the War Relocation Authority camp at Manzanar, California, where he joined his wife, daughter, son-in-law and granddaughter, and remained there until 1945. Since all inmates were forbidden to take photographs in the camps, Takamura depicted his experiences and the surrounding landscapes of Santa Fe and Manzanar in drawings and watercolors. He also worked as a camp sign-maker at Santa Fe and as curator for a small museum at Manzanar. At the end of the war, he returned to Hollywood and worked at RKO Studios for another twenty-five years before retiring. Patricia Wakida. "Kango Takamura," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Kango%20Takamura (accessed Apr 21 2021).

FK: Yes. Takamura.

RM: What do you know about him?

FK: I only know that he was one of the staff members at the museum. And well, and that he made those posters for each of the exhibits.

RM: Oh. He was the one who made those posters.

FK: Yes.

RM: Oh, my goodness.

FK: Yeah.

RM: Yeah. And these are the posters that you had given scans of to Manzanar at some point.

FK: Yes.

RM: Okay. There was also, of course, on the museum staff, Toyo Miyatake.

FK: Yes.

RM: How did your father come to meet Toyo, and –[34]

FK: I think it was just there at the camp. You know, they were in the same block. And, yeah. I think they, you know, had some things in common because they were both older and had come from Japan when they were young men. And my father was, really, kind of, out of place in that Japanese community because most of the *Issei*, which he was, first generation, were much older than him. And it come like, up to 1907, I think you said, was when many Japanese couldn't come anymore. And then the next generation were *Nisei* who had been born here who were generally younger than my dad. And so he kind of, didn't fit. I don't think he had many people he could make friends with easily. But I think Toyo was one of

[34] LN: "Toyo took their wedding photo on December 7, 1936."

those because of the interest in art. And well, my dad used to be a real amateur photographer in Chicago. He took a lot of photographs there, and so.

RM: Oh, he did?

FK: He did. Yeah. That's why we have a lot of photographs of the Harding Museum. And in fact, when the Art Institute was putting together their exhibit – they just put together this new exhibit a year ago – they borrowed some of our albums because my dad had photographs of the interior of the museum with the arms and armor displayed. And so they used some of that to help them see how it should be displayed.

RM: Your father seems like he was a jack of all trades.

FK: Yeah. He really was.

RM: So he bonded with Toyo over the photography then, as well?

FK: I think so. Yeah.

RM: Amazing. We've seen lists of all of the artwork that was on display at that museum. And the art, some of those paintings have been donated back to Manzanar. And it's really amazing to see that they, at one point, hung in your father's Visual Education Museum. And now they're in the museum –

FK: Oh, that's wonderful.

RM: – at the national historic site. Yeah.

FK: Well, the last time I went, I did see the mural that was there in the museum. And now it's displayed in your visitor center.[35]

[35] The mural by Tamekichi Carl Hibino is on loan from the Eastern California Museum to Manzanar National Historic Site. It was created for the Visual Education Museum and is depicted in Ansel Adams' portrait of Hibino taken in 1943 in Manzanar.

RM: Right. Do you think your father had a sense of the importance of what he was doing? I mean, the long-term importance of what he was doing? Because it was important to people there. But it's also had this extraordinary lasting impact across the decades, this Visual Education Museum and all of the artists he pulled together. Do you think he had a sense of that?

FK: I don't think so. I mean, it's difficult to say because my dad – I think because of the war experience and the camps, he really, I think, was depressed most of his life after that. And he just didn't like to talk about either the camp or his life before that. Because I think it was just too shameful for him to talk about. So most of the things I know are from my mother of those times. Yeah.

RM: Was your mother involved in helping with the Visual Education Museum?[36]

FK: I don't think so. I don't recall her saying so.

RM: How did she spend her days while in Manzanar?

FK: Well, I guess she was taking care of my sister. Because even though my grandmother was there living with us, I think my grandmother was working in the mess hall washing dishes or something like that.

RM: In Block 20 Mess Hall?

FK: Hm-hmm [affirmative].

RM: Your aunt. Could you tell me about how her life changed while she was in Manzanar?

FK: Yeah. Well at first, my grandmother and my aunt both lived with us in the same barracks. But during our time there, my aunt met and married her – Norie Takeuchi who became her husband. And he had come from Heart Mountain. His wife had died. And I guess the rest

[36] LN: "She was the secretary at one point."

of his wife's family might have been at Manzanar. So he moved to Manzanar and somehow met my aunt. And they got married there in camp.[37]

RM: Do you know, were they married in like, the Buddhist Church? Or are you aware?

FK: I'm not. But I think it was. I seem to recall that the little altar that they had was used in other weddings at Manzanar. You know, there are pictures of brides and grooms in front of that little altar.

RM: I see. Yeah.

FK: So I assume so. Although, you know, I've read recently that people didn't get married in Buddhist Temples. The Shinto Shrines were for marriages and the Buddhist Temples were for funerals. So.

RM: I've read that too, but there were so many people in Manzanar who were married in the Buddhist Church, the Buddhist Temple in Manzanar. Yeah. So, I don't know.

FK: Well maybe, you know, I don't think they wanted to have any Shinto things because it was too associated with the emperor and, you know, all that Japanese culture. Of course, Buddhism is, sort of, too, but.

RM: I was wondering if you could describe – well, you know what? Actually, let's get to something very important that happened in Manzanar. When and where were you born?

FK: Okay. I was born February 26, 1945 at the hospital in Manzanar.

RM: And what was your full name at birth?

FK: Fumino Tsuchiya.

RM: Do you know if Fumino has a translation or meaning in Japanese?

[37] LN: "Toyo took their wedding photos at Manzanar. Reverend Nagatomi married them at Manzanar."

FK: Well, the *fumi* is a word for letter or sentence. So it's kind of like, a root word for literature. And then the *no* is the possessive in Japanese. And I know my father's mother was named Tameno. So I think that's why they used that. But they consulted with somebody in camp who supposedly, you know, would recommend the best name for your child. And that was how they got it.

RM: And so you got the best name.

FK: Yeah.

RM: It also seems with your father's reading habits that to have a literary name makes sense.

FK: That's true.

RM: Before you were born, your parents and every other person in Manzanar and the other camps who were 17 and older had to answer something that came to be known as the loyalty questionnaire.[38]

FK: Yes.

RM: Do you have any understanding of how your parents reacted to that questionnaire?

FK: Well, they both answered yes-yes. But I believe there's an interview of my father with one of the sociologists which –

RM: Oh. Morris Opler.

FK: Who was asking him about it. And he was complaining about it, that it wasn't right to do that. Yeah.

[38] In 1943, the War Department and the War Relocation Authority (WRA) joined forces to create a bureaucratic means of assessing the loyalty of Nikkei in the WRA concentration camps. All adults were asked to answer questions on a form that become known informally as the "loyalty questionnaire." Responses to this questionnaire were meant to aid the War Department in recruiting Nisei into an all-Nisei combat unit and the to assist the War Relocation Authority in authorizing others for relocation outside of the camps. The registration program provoked a wide range of resistance due to its provocative "loyalty" questions and built resentment among Issei and Nisei over their unconstitutional wartime treatment. Cherstin Lyon. "Loyalty questionnaire," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Loyalty%20questionnaire (accessed Apr 21 2021).

RM: Yeah. That's right. He is very insightful into what was wrong with that questionnaire. Absolutely.

FK: Yeah.

RM: Just prior to that questionnaire, something happened in Manzanar that sometimes is called the Manzanar Riot.[39]

FK: Yeah.

RM: Though, riot is not a very good word for it. But did your parents ever talk to you about that event and what happened?[40]

FK: They didn't.

RM: Okay.

FK: Yeah.

RM: I just thought I'd better ask just in case. What was it like for your mom to be pregnant and have a baby in a place like Manzanar?

FK: I would imagine it was pretty hard. And my father wasn't there for a lot of the time because my father was looking for a job and a place to relocate to. And in fact, that's how I think I was conceived was when my mother and father went out on one of the trips to Chic-, I think they went to Chicago and New York. Well, because my grandmother lived with us, you know, in the barracks. But, yeah. And then my father wasn't there actually when I was born. So I would think it was pretty hard for her. And you know, we're sort of

[39] A December 1942 incident at the Manzanar camp that resulted in the institution of martial law at the camp and that culminated with soldiers firing into a crowd of inmates, killing two and injuring many. The incident was triggered by the beating of Japanese American Citizens League leader Fred Tayama upon his return from a meeting in Salt Lake City and the arrest and detention of Harry Ueno for the beating. Coming one year after the attack on Pearl Harbor, sensationalist coverage of the event inflamed anti-Japanese sentiment outside the camps. The episode exposed deep divisions within the inmate population and with the camp administration. Brian Niiya. "Manzanar riot/uprising," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Manzanar%20riot/uprising (accessed Apr 21 2021).

[40] LN: "They mentioned it to me in 1983 for my family history report."

speculating that she may have had to walk to the hospital. I don't know if she did or not. But it was way across the camp.

RM: Yeah. It's a long way from Block 20. So your dad wasn't there when you were born.

FK: No.

RM: Where was he?

FK: I think he was in Pennsylvania at the Birdseye Farms. What were they called?

RM: Oh. He was at –

FK: Seabrook.[41]

RM: Seabrook Farms.

FK: Seabrook Farms. Because my aunt and uncle went there. And they did relocate there. So I think he went to try it for a while.

RM: I didn't realize that. So your father was working at Seabrook.

FK: For a short time. Yeah.

RM: Okay. I see. So he was able to go out and try to find a place for the family fairly frequently?

FK: Yeah. Because apparently, they went in 1944. And then he was gone when I was born. And then we have postcards from him where he was looking for a job like, in Colorado. It might have been at the Air Force Academy to teach there. But then he finally got a job in Oklahoma. But he wrote a postcard back to my mother to tell her that he got the job so that she should get train tickets to Stillwater.

[41] Seabrook Farms, located in Cumberland County, New Jersey, was once one of the largest producers of canned, frozen, and dehydrated vegetables in America. By utilizing innovative farming, production, and distribution practices, it became a major food supplier to the U.S. military during World War II. To meet production needs, Seabrook hired immigrant workers as well as a large number of Japanese Americans recently released from concentration camps and "relocated" by War Relocation Authority (WRA) mandate. These Japanese American workers played a critical role in the Farms' success and even still today a Japanese presence exists in New Jersey. Kelli Nakamura. "Seabrook Farms," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Seabrook%20Farms (accessed Apr 21 2021).

RM: Wow. Okay.

FK: Yeah.

RM: I just have a few more Manzanar questions for you before we get to times you might actually have in your own memory. Did your father interact much with the administration in his role in Manzanar as the Visual Education Lead?

FK: I think he did. But I don't know about specifics. But as I recall, there was a letter of recommendation from somebody in the administration for him for his job hunting.[42]

RM: To help him get out of Manzanar and find work.

FK: Yeah.

RM: That's interesting. Okay. Whitney, do you have questions about Manzanar that I may have missed?

WP: I do not, no.

RM: Okay. Just out of curiosity, are you aware if your father – I'm assuming he met Ansel Adams when they set up that exhibit. But –

FK: Yeah.

RM: – did you hear any stories about that?

FK: I didn't hear stories, but we did have an original book signed originally by Ansel Adams of his. You know, the book he had published of his photographs there. I don't have it anymore, but.

RM: Of *Born Free and Equal*?

FK: Hm-hmm [affirmative].

[42] LN: "Yes. Ralph Merritt and Genevieve Carter wrote letters for him."

RM: Yeah. There's photos that Toyo Miyatake took of that exhibit of Ansel Adams photographs in the Visual Education Museum. And it's just an incredible thing to see all the people in Manzanar walking through and looking at photos of themselves up on the walls.

FK: Yeah.

RM: Okay. How was it that your family came to move to Stillwater, Oklahoma?

FK: Well, my dad got a job with, as I understand it, the navy, although it sounds funny, in Stillwater, which is totally inland. But to teach Japanese to naval officers there at the, I think it's Oklahoma State is there in Stillwater.

RM: How did he find that job?

FK: I have no idea. Yeah.

RM: Okay. I think that's the papers that you had donated to us was your father filling out a form for the navy for that position.

FK: Oh, okay. Okay. Well, I'm sure they must have let everybody in the camps know about a job like that, right? Because there weren't that many people who could teach Japanese.

RM: Right. Because you had to be bilingual. You had to also be very comfortable in English.

FK: Yeah.

RM: Did your father ever share with you how he felt about going to work for the same military that had incarcerated your family?

FK: Yeah, I did ask him about that. Especially because later he worked for the army in Tokyo at the war crimes trials as a translator which just seemed like an incredibly hard thing to do after the war. But he, you know, was sort of inscrutable as usual. I think to him – well, one, to go to Japan he wanted to see his mother. But just the fact of working for the army,

I think he just, it was too hard for him to talk about. And he just more approached it as something he had to do as a job.

RM: How long had he worked for the navy in Stillwater?

FK: It seems like just a year and, until '46. Yeah. I believe that's what we just saw looking at the papers.

RM: I think that's right. I think it said you left Manzanar in July of '45.

FK: Of '45. Hm-hmm [affirmative].

RM: Okay. And then you were in Stillwater for a year.

FK: Yeah.

RM: What happened next after Stillwater?

FK: Then, my dad went to Japan to work for the army. And my mother, grandmother, sister, and I came here to Richmond. And we were living in this housing project here in Richmond that, you know, one of the housing projects that had been built for the African Americans who came from the south to work in the shipyards. There were a number of Japanese living in those after the war. And so we were living in those. My mother would take the bus from Richmond all the way up to the Oakland Hills. And she was cleaning houses in the Oakland Hills. So we lived there for two years while my dad was in Japan. And my sister went to school. I guess she would have been in early grammar school then. Yeah. And then in 1948 we went to Japan and joined my father there. And we lived there for a year.

RM: What is your very earliest memory from your life?

FK: It's living in the project. Like, sitting in the high chair and asking for my breakfast. And I have a number of memories from Richmond. There was just the shower in the apartment. And my grandmother insisted we take a bath. So she had this giant, you know, one of those

metal washbasins to wash clothes in. And she would bring that inside. And they would fill it with hot water that they heated on the stove. And, yeah. It was interesting.

I don't know if you've heard about the Japanese flower growers in Richmond. That was a big community before the war, and then after the war too. But, so the projects, I remember, were on one side of these railroad tracks. And on the other side were all of these glass greenhouses in which they were growing flowers. They were Japanese flower growers. And we used to see young men, you know, repairing the greenhouses and working there. Yeah. It was an old-time – I mean, the train would go right by the project.

RM: How did that housing project compare to what you've learned about the conditions of the barracks at Manzanar?

FK: Well, they did have indoor plumbing.

RM: So, that's a big difference.

FK: Yeah. Yeah. And there were separate rooms. I think it was a one-bedroom apartment. You know, and it had a kitchen and a living room, dining room, and a bedroom, and the shower. I don't remember the rest of the bathroom. But. Yeah. So it was slightly better, I guess.

RM: How many other Japanese American families were living in that project?

FK: I don't know. But I think there were quite a few because I think that was one of the places they relocated Japanese to. And I have one friend who's a *Sansei* who also lived in those projects.[43]

[43] Sansei is the third generation, the children of the Nisei and grandchildren of the Issei.

RM: Were there still African Americans who had come to work during the war that were living there after the war?

FK: I think there were, but I don't remember any. I know there were whites that were also living in those projects.

RM: Okay. Yeah. I don't know too much about the projects. This is very interesting to me.

FK: Oh. Yeah. You know, they tore them down. So not many people remember them. But there was an exhibit about the Japanese flower growers in Richmond several years ago. And they had some pictures there, photographs of the projects. Yeah. They were all fourplexes with two on the bottom and two on top. Yeah.

RM: And your family was there until going to join your father in Japan.

FK: Right. Late '48.

RM: Okay. What do you remember about moving to Japan?

FK: Yeah. It was a real adventure for me because we went on a ship. And I think it took like 10 days or something. So it was a pretty long trip. I remember there was a chaplain on the boat that would read stories to the little kids every day. And I remember drinking black tea for the first time in the dining room which was – oh, it was so delicious to me. And that there were these, you know how it is in a boat where they have a division between the hallway and the room. And you have to step over that to get into the room so that they could protect it against water. And I used to trip over those all the time. Yeah.

RM: And you were three years old at this point?

FK: Yeah. Almost four.

RM: Okay.

FK: Yeah.

RM: Where did you live in Japan? And what were your first impressions as a child of Japan post-war?

FK: Yeah. We lived in the army officer's housing in Central Tokyo. And it was up like, on a hill. And there were these homes that were – they might have been duplexes. But they were two-story. We had three bedrooms, or at least two bedrooms upstairs. And then I know there was a bedroom downstairs that was like, a maid's quarters. And we actually had a Japanese maid while we were living there. My dad bought a car while we were there. It was a 1949 Ford. And then we had it brought back to the US when we came back in '49. I started nursery school at the Army Nursery School. And my mom says that was when I first started speaking English.

RM: Hm. Was in Japan?

FK: Was in Japan. Yeah. And I remember, we used to be able to see General McArthur walking to the Diet building in the morning.[44] And we were pretty close to the Imperial Palace too because my grandmother used to take me down there to see the koi, the carp in the moat around the castle. And oh, I remember it was so poor. And there were all these, the kids would keep asking the soldiers for candy. Yeah. That was really sad. So it was, kind of, it was really, sort of, surreal that we were living in the army officer's housing, you know, and the rest of the country was just devastated. Yeah.

RM: Do you think it was also surreal for your parents considering what World War II was like for them?

FK: I would think so. I would think so, yeah. I mean, I think that's why they decided to come back. That there was nothing there, you know, at the time.

[44] The National Diet is Japan's bicameral legislature. It is composed of a lower house, called the House of Representatives and an upper house, the House of Councillors.

RM: What was it like for your grandmother to be living in Japan again?

FK: Yeah. It must have been strange for her. Of course, I never asked her. But she did get to see her family, her half-brother, I think her step-mother had already passed away. But half-brother had children now who were in their 20s. And we went to visit them. And for my father, we went to visit his sister and her family.

RM: Do you remember those trips to your –

FK: Hm-hmm [affirmative].

RM: – grandparents –

FK: Yeah. I remember one of the trips, we were in a Jeep. I guess we were able to use an army jeep. And we're going up a hill and there was a goat and a big block of ice, it seemed like. I mean, maybe I'm not remembering it completely correctly. But that's what I recall about one of the trips to go there. And then at his sister's house, I remember my mother was congratulating me on how I hadn't tripped in the entire time we had been at her house. And then on the last day I fell down some stairs or something. So, yeah.

And then, I do remember, you know, they used to have *jinrikishas* which were rickshaws driven by bicycle. And we used to go around in those sometimes, I guess. And once – now, I don't remember if I was in that rickshaw too, but I know my grandmother was in a rickshaw and it turned over. Not all the way over, but it went on its side. That was a big, you know, event.

RM: Were you aware of cultural differences between like, Japanese American culture and Japanese culture? Did anything stand out to you, like different ways of doing things from?

FK: I don't think so.

RM: You were so little.

FK: Yeah.

RM: Yeah. I've heard some people talk about like, knocking on doors. And like, Japanese Americans go to Japan and knock on doors. And then –

FK: And you're not supposed to do that.

RM: And you're not supposed to bang on the door like that and things like that. But, yeah. I just wanted to see if there was anything from, as a, you know, four-year-old.

FK: Yeah. I don't really remember.

RM: Okay. Were you aware of the work that your father was doing as a translator for war crimes?

FK: I don't think so at that time.

RM: Yeah. When did you become aware of that and what that meant?

FK: It was sometime in grammar school. But I don't really remember when.

RM: I wonder what his experience was like doing that kind of work.

FK: Yeah. I know. It seems like he said once that the top leaders were criminals. But, you know, he just didn't like to talk about any of those things. Yeah.

RM: Could you describe your father's personality, you know, from a daughter's perspective? What was he like?

FK: Well, it's interesting the more I've thought about it. It seemed to me that when we were in Japan, it must have been a really good time for him because, you know, he had a good job and we were living in a nice place and all. Because I can remember him like, sitting out with us and looking at shooting stars and taking us fishing and, you know, other things. Taking me to the cherry blossoms to see the cherry blossoms. But afterwards, the main

thing I remember about him, he was so strict and rigid. And I think it was just really, you know, depression and defensiveness and all stemming from the war. Yeah. Because he wasn't able to find a good job after he came back. I mean, the jobs that, I mean, the curator job, he wasn't schooled to become that or anything. So it's kind of understandable how he wouldn't have been able to find a job like that. But apparently, I mean, I don't know how much he looked for professional jobs teaching or something else. But when we came back, I know at first, for a couple of weeks, he was trying to sell vacuum cleaners door to door. And then, in our neighborhood in Boyle Heights, that's where we lived after we came back. There was a Japanese family next door. And there were like, three adult sons. They were all gardeners. And so he became a gardener. And he did that for about five years or so.

RM: How old was your father at that point?

FK: So, he was 50 to 55. Yeah. It just must have been so hard for him because, you know, I was born when he was 45 years old. And I'm sure it wasn't easy for him to think about, you know, having to raise kids when he was that age and after the war and everything.

RM: Also, to go from a position so important translating for war crime trials for World War II.

FK: Yeah.

RM: And then, to only be able to find work as a gardener in California.

FK: Yeah.

RM: Did he ever voice his feelings about that?

FK: No.

RM: Yeah. Do you have recollections of instances of overt or not overt discrimination against you or your family when you came back to California from Japan?

FK: Well, I don't think I'd say discrimination. I mean, that I experienced. But there was a lot of, you know, kids would make fun of you and that type of thing. I just remember when I was in junior high school, we moved from Boyle Heights which was like, Mexican American with a few Japanese and very few Jewish kids. We moved from there to Gardena which was white suburb with about 20 percent Japanese or so. And when my mother was looking for the house, she asked the realtor, "Can Japanese buy in this area?" And he said, "Oh, yes. We don't like Blacks. But Japanese are fine."

RM: Hm.

FK: Yeah. And then I remember, when I was in sixth grade, my grammar school teacher who I just thought was wonderful – but one day we were talking about the camps. And he said, "Well, you know that it was for your own good that your family was sent there. That was to protect them and everything." And I just, I knew then that, you know, that wasn't quite right. So. I was –

RM: And that was a teacher that you liked.

FK: Yeah.

RM: Yeah. You told us earlier about your mom sending you to kindergarten and telling you to tell them you were born in Manzanar Relocation Center. Did you ever have to do that? Was that something that happened?

FK: I don't recall having to do that. Yeah.

RM: And what were your school years like for you?

FK: You know, I think I was really lucky because in Boyle Heights, the Japanese students were, you know, the teachers just loved us because we were the best students. And so that experience was pretty good. And then moved to Gardena and it was kind of the same. It

was the whole model minority sort of thing.[45] And they just thought Japanese kids were wonderful, you know? So I was pretty lucky.

RM: In Boyle Heights, you said the community was mostly Mexican American and Jewish and Japanese American. What did you do for fun there? Who were your friends? What was it like growing up there? I've heard so much about Boyle Heights.

FK: Oh, really?

RM: Yeah. If you could bring that community to life for me, what would you say?

FK: Well, it was neat. You know, it was Mexican American. I mean, they call it the *barrio* now. The kids used to be able to leave school every Thursday afternoon to go to the Catholic Church for catechism. And when they did that, there would be only about two of us left in the classroom. We used to – I don't know. It's just I remember there were, you know, grocery stores that, of course, back then in the neighborhood on the corners. And on Sunday morning you would see the Mexican women. They would be going to the grocery store with these pots or something to get *menudo* to take home which is supposedly for hangovers. And there were the Catholic Churches all over. My best friend, when I was in grammar school, was a Mexican girl. Her name was Lourdes Ayala [phonetic]. And that was why I named my daughter Lourdes.

RM: Oh, my gosh.

FK: Yeah.

[45] The idea that Japanese Americans and other Asian Americans are a model minority aroused great controversy during the 1960s. On the one hand, white commentators heaped praise on Japanese Americans for their collective educational attainment, economic achievement, law-abiding behavior, and high moral character. On the other hand, conservative commentators on race relations and critics of remedial state intervention, used the model minority discourse as an ideological club to be wielded. In response, Japanese American activists denounced the notion of the "model minority myth" which they argued was built on a distorted and exaggerated concept of Japanese American success and was used to denigrate other communities of color for their purported failure to pick themselves up by their bootstraps. Scott Kurashige. "Model minority," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Model%20minority (accessed Apr 21 2021).

RM: Wow.

FK: It was really a neat time. I think because in Boyle Heights there weren't very many whites except for maybe the teachers. I remember one white friend in grammar school. And it seemed like her family were, maybe they were, they might have been poor whites from the south, or from Kentucky, you know, that kind of area. But there weren't any whites. I mean, there was Jewish kids and they were all moving out to West LA. So that by the time I finished grammar school, all but one of my Jewish friends had moved.

RM: What was the name of the grammar school you went to?

FK: Malabar Street School.[46]

RM: Did you ever go down into Little Tokyo?

FK: Yes. Yeah.

RM: Tell me what it was like. Yeah.

FK: Well, my grandmother used to go like to go see her friends in Little Tokyo. So usually, like, on Thursdays, I think – well, now I'm not sure how we did it because I used to go to Japanese school every day after school.

RM: You did?

FK: I did. All through grammar school. And then in junior high school, I went on Saturdays all the way through junior high school. I think it was in 10th grade I finally stopped going. But anyways, so I used to do that after school. So I don't know how I got to go with my grandmother. But we used to take the streetcar down to Little Tokyo. And she had her round of friends. She had the Itatanis [phonetic] who had the watch repair place that my uncle's first wife was part of their family. We'd visit them. We'd go to the stationary store

[46] LN: "Malabar Street Elementary School at 3200 Malabar, Los Angeles."

where my aunt used to work and visit them. She knew the family that owned that. She knew some people at the confectionary stores that were there and we'd go visit them. And we'd always go to the grocery store, Enbun, and get like – you know, now they sell *miso* in the little plastic containers. But there, it used to be like, in a barrel. And the man would scoop it out with his hands and put it in one of those little milk carton things. Yeah. It was really, it was neat.

RM: Did you ever go to the Miyatake Studio?

FK: Oh, yeah. We would go there too. And especially if my dad was with us, which he would be sometimes, we'd go there and see the whole family. Mrs. Toyo and Mr. Miyatake and the sons. The son, Archie, took like, all the photographs at the piano recitals I used to be in.[47] Because I took piano lessons from a Japanese teacher who had all Japanese students. And he took like, my graduation picture and –

RM: Oh, Archie did?

FK: Yeah, yeah. And I don't have a picture here, but he took a family picture of us when Lourdes was about, a little less than two because I was pregnant with her younger sister, Alyssa [phonetic 01:54:36] then. Yeah. So we knew them very well.

RM: That's really neat. And that was because your father worked with Toyo in Manzanar.

FK: Right.

RM: All the families got to know each other better.

FK: Yeah. Now, I don't know if my grandmother knew the family from the days when she lived there.

RM: Oh, right. Yeah.

[4747] For more on Atsufumi Archie Miyatake, see Manzanar Oral History Interview MANZ-1007.

FK: But, anyway. Yeah.

RM: Did you ever attend Nisei Week?

FK: Oh, yes. Every few –

RM: Could you tell me about it?

FK: Well, every year around the time school let out in mid-June, they would start to have rehearsals for the *odori*, the Japanese dance that they would have at Nisei Week. And so we would go there. I think it was about twice a week in Little Tokyo we would go there for the rehearsals. This would be like, after dinner from around seven to nine. And then we'd dance in the *odori* and, gosh, we'd watch the parade. I remember that, where people would line First Street, including a lot of whites. I remember seeing this actor there. I think his name was Hans Conried. Actor from the '50s who was standing there in front of us. But we used to watch the parade. You know, they had this whole parade with the Nisei Week Queen and princesses and everything.

Then they would have – what did they call it – a bazaar type of thing where they would have games that you could play. And all the high school and college aged – not all of them, but many of them were in clubs. Girls' Clubs and Boys' Clubs. And like, my sister was in a club. And they used to have a booth where you would play some game and get a prize. And her club did something every year in that. So we'd go and play in those things. And it was pretty neat.

And then later, from about July to August, they had the rehearsals for the practice for the *Obon odori.* And so we would go to those because the dances would be a little different.

And for those, we'd dance both for the one in Little Tokyo as well as the one in West LA where my aunt lived. And we'd get all dressed in kimonos and it was a big event.

RM: Did your family continue? You said your mom had gone to *Nishi Hongwanji* when she was young.

FK: Young.

RM: Did you also?

FK: Yeah. My mom didn't go anymore. But I did on Sundays. And my sister did all through grammar school. Well, junior high, because we had moved to Gardena. I think for a while I used to take the bus back down to Little Tokyo and go to the Sunday school. But that didn't last too long. Yeah.

RM: Where did you attend Japanese school? Where was that?

FK: It was at a woman's home right on the same street we lived on in Boyle Heights.

RM: Do you remember your teacher's name?

FK: It was Monobe [phonetic 01:58:20]. Mrs. Monobe. Yeah. But she just had a little school in her living room, you know.

RM: How did you feel about having to go to Japanese school?

FK: Yeah. It just seemed like something I had to do. I didn't particularly like it or not. But there was, you know, a group of us. There were four of us in my class and there were some kids older, like in my sister's class, and some younger. So there was a little community there. I remember we used to like, play marbles before school, and. Yeah. I mean, in a way, it was fun. It was the Japanese community, I guess.

RM: Okay. I can't believe it's been an hour.

FK: Oh.

RM: So why don't we take another quick break.

FK: Okay.

RM: Is that okay? All right.

[Begin MANZ 1553_2]

RM: Okay. We're back with part three of an oral history with Fumi Knox. And you were just saying you had a couple more things about Boyle Heights and Nisei Week.

FK: Yeah. I just was remembering that in Boyle Heights there was a place they called a hostel which apparently was a place where a lot of single Japanese men went after the war to live. It was right there in Boyle Heights. But it always seemed a little bit, you know, like, ooh, something I don't know about, except to hear that said about it. But anyway, sort of a remnant of the relocation, back.

RM: Men who didn't have –

FK: Resettlement.

RM: – a family after the war?

FK: Yeah.

RM: I see.

FK: And the other thing I was remembering about Nisei Week is actually my sister was a Nisei Week Princess. It was in about 1961, I think.

RM: Wow.

FK: Yeah.

RM: Could you tell me more about your sister? I haven't really asked about her.

FK: Yeah. She was really beautiful. She was, you know, very popular. Kind of different from me. I was, sort of, the – what do you call it? The study person. Bookworm. But, yeah.

So, she always felt that she had moved around so much. She, kind of, was mad at my parents for having moved her so much because she went to kindergarten or nursery school and kindergarten in Manzanar. She went to school in Stillwater. She went to school in Richmond, then in Japan. And then finally, she came back – you know, we came back to LA and she started fourth grade in East LA in Boyle Heights and then went through junior high. But in the middle of high school, my parents decided to move to Gardena. So that was a real hard transition for her. Until then, she was doing really well in school. And my parents always thought she was going to be a lawyer. But she never did that.

After high school she found this dance troop that she just loved. And she joined it. It was a dance troop that pretended to be from Japan. They called themselves the Keigo Imperial Dancers. And they danced at all these nightclubs in Europe and Mexico and Canada and back east. They were even on the Ed Sullivan Show a couple of times. It was like, a troop of about six women and this one male dancer. And they had all this Japanese kimono regalia that, at least, in the nightclubs – I don't remember that they did this on the Ed Sullivan Show. But we went to one of their acts in Las Vegas. And they would start off coming in onto the stage with Japanese music and everything, and all, you know, dressed in the kimonos. And then a few minutes into the show they would whisk open the kimonos and they had little bikinis on. And then they would change into an American style dancing. I mean, it was really something. My parents were just mortified that their daughter would be doing that. Yeah.

RM: How did she learn how to dance?

FK: Well, she took some lessons, but I guess she was just good at it.

RM: Yeah. How many years did she do that for?

FK: She did that for, gosh, from around when I was in junior high – maybe about five years. Yeah. And then she, sort of, settled down and got married. And I think she might have gone one more time after she got married for about six months, but. Yeah.

RM: When you were growing up, what was your relationship with your sister like since she's five years older than you?

FK: Yeah. We didn't do a lot together. I really looked up to her. It seemed like she knew how to do everything. And you know, I remember trying to help when her club was making these little prizes they were going to give away at the Nisei Week thing. And I was always a bother to her. And she would take me to Sunday school in Little Tokyo. And you know, it was a big chore for her to take me. And so, yeah. We didn't have a lot –

RM: The little sister always tagging along.

FK: Yeah.

RM: Yeah. Is your sister still alive?

FK: No. She passed away in the nineties.[48] Yeah. She died pretty young.[49]

RM: Did she ever talk to you about her memories as a child of what Manzanar was like?

FK: She remembered some things. She remembered being with my aunt in Manzanar. And like, I guess there was a koi pond there too, and going on the bridge over that. Not too much else that I remember her talking about. But she remembers my being born and that I was really ugly. And – oh, dear. Anyway.

RM: I'm sure that wasn't true. But that sounds very much like a big sister thing to say.

FK: Yeah. Right, right.

[48] LN: "November 1994 of lung cancer."
[49] LN: "54 years old"

RM: Oh, my goodness. I had asked you about your father's personality, but I never asked you about your mom's personality. Could you describe your mom to me?

FK: My mom was, kind of, two different people. She was generally very shy and retiring. You know, not at all outspoken and aggressive or assertive even. She was very much the Japanese woman.

But then after we came back from Japan, she got this job working at a chain of yarn stores in LA. And first she was a cashier. And then she was, sort of, promoted to be store manager. And then she was put in charge of the warehouse. And the warehouse had a couple of big burley African American men who, you know, would move the stuff around in there. And then it would usually have – well, something she started – it used to have women. But then after she came, it was all Japanese women, who were putting the labels on the yarn, you know? I mean, this was just a hand-thing at that time. You'd stick it on a hook and you'd pull the label onto it. That type of thing. So there would be like, 10 or 15 women working. And she was in charge of that whole thing.

And, and eventually that chain grew. So they had like, 15 stores or something. And they would make the deliveries out of this warehouse. So she was also responsible for making sure those deliveries got put together and the men came and took them out. And you know, it was a huge job. So, and she would boss these people around just amazingly. It was really funny. So you know, here she was like, this tyrant at work. And then she'd be home. And of course, you know, she would never speak up to my father. And, and even, you

know, her mother lived with us. So she would defer to her mother. And, yeah. It was pretty interesting.[50]

RM: That's very interesting.

FK: Yeah.

RM: Do you think that the fact that she was *Nisei* and your father was *Issei* ever, like, had an impact on their relationship in any way whether positive or negative?

FK: Yeah. I mean, I think it did. They were clearly not really meant to be. I mean, my dad was real intellectual and, you know, quiet and liked to read and everything. And my mother was more sociable and she was more doer, kind of. Like, they would say in Japanese, *gasa-gasa* a little bit. She would always be doing something. And she wasn't at all interested in art and those kinds of things. She was, kind of, interested in the front page of the newspaper. Yeah. They didn't have anything in common. They hardly talked at meals. Yeah.

RM: What kind of values did they try to instill in you and your sister when you were growing up?

FK: Well, definitely that we had to work hard. I mean, study hard. And they were very strict. I mean, you weren't supposed to goof off and have fun. You were supposed to do what you were supposed to do. I remember one assignment from Japanese school was we were supposed to ask our parents what their greatest treasure was. And I asked my father and he said, "Well, it's you and your sister." You know, he said, "We just, you know, that's all there is for us in this life. There's nothing more for us. So it's all for you." Which, you know, it's, kind of like, a typical parent thing. But also, I think, he really felt like his

[50] LN: "She was general manger of Super Yarn Mart."

time had passed by the time he came back from Japan. Yeah. I think he sort of thought he couldn't make anything of his life anymore. And at that time, he was 50. And we used to think of 50 as being a lot older than we think of it now.

RM: Yeah.

FK: Yeah. Anyway, and they would also, it was very important not to do anything that would make your family have shame, you know? You just were supposed to conform in every way. And yet, you were supposed to be really American. You know? It was, kind of, a conflicting set of values.

RM: Yeah. How did you navigate that?

FK: I just, I grew away from it more and more. When I was going to go to college, my mom wanted me to go to UCLA because there were so many Japanese kids there. And she was always worried about my being some place where there weren't other Japanese. I think she thought I would be discriminated against or not treated well. And I sort of thought, well, you just do well and you can do anything, you know? So I didn't want to go to UCLA. I went to Occidental College.

And you know, I married a non-Japanese, a Caucasian person. And I rarely dated any Japanese boys. And I think it was just because I was trying to not be part of that community that was – it just seemed so cloistered. You know, that you had a Japanese insurance agent, and a Japanese plumber, and everything. There was a Japanese phone book. And you know, whenever they needed the yellow pages, they'd look in there. It just seemed so confining to me that I didn't want to be part of it. And so, yeah, I tried to get away from it.

RM: Why do you think the community was like that, was cloistered?

FK: Well, I'm sure it had to do with the war, you know? I mean, but they had been from before the war too. There was that whole Little Tokyo community. But I think the war reinforced it.

RM: It reinforced that it was discriminatory outside of the community.

FK: Yeah. Yeah.

RM: Yeah. Do you feel like you're more like one of your parents than the other?

FK: I think I'm more like my father. But then I do have parts of both of them. I don't know. It's hard to say. But I mean, I know I do like studying and learning more like he did.

RM: What did you want to be when you grew up?

FK: I wanted to be a lawyer. And I remember my mom telling me, "Oh, no. You should be a teacher. You know, your sister's going to be a lawyer." Because she thought she argued better. My sister argued better. But anyway, my sister didn't do that. And so, and I went and I became a math teacher first because my mom wanted me to do that. And it was horrible. I was straight out of college. And I was too young. And I just hated it. And I was very happy when I had a baby and I could quit teaching. But I had wanted to be a lawyer. And so, you know, I went back to law school when I was 50.

RM: I didn't know that. Wow.

FK: Oh, yeah.

RM: Oh, my gosh.

FK: My second husband passed away when I was 47. And we were going to, kind of, retire, but at that point I just felt like if I were by myself, I was too young to be retired. So I wanted to do something. And, yeah. I thought, well, I'll go to law school.

RM: Wow.

FK: That's what I wanted to do.

RM: Wow. Where did you go to law school?

FK: I went to Cal.

RM: Incredible. And did you end up practicing law?

FK: I did. For almost 20 years. Yeah.

RM: That's an amazing story. I feel like a lot of people don't do that later in life. You know, take that chance and that step.

FK: Yeah.

RM: Let me rewind back to high school. I know we're jumping around a little bit, but.

FK: Okay.

RM: Just because we found this photo of you –

FK: Oh, yes.

RM: – as the Spirited Song Queen –

FK: Right.

RM: – at Gardena High School. Could you tell me a little bit about your high school experience and, including being the Spirited Song Queen?

FK: Well, it was all-in-all a pretty good experience. You know, I did really well in school. I was a math major. And I remember going to a special seminar at Pepperdine College when I was in high school during the summer. And then another summer I went to a seminar in international relations. So you know, I did really well in school. And the high school was pretty interesting. You know, it reflected Gardena in that there were like, 20 or maybe even 30 percent Japanese in the school. And they were all the leaders at the school. Yeah.

In all the service clubs and the, you know, student body offices and that kind of thing. So it was pretty interesting. You know, different, I think, from maybe what other kids experienced in high school. I mean, even though we weren't the majority, it almost seemed like we were because all of the Japanese kids did so well. Yeah.

RM: Were there any classes you took either in high school or in college where you studied the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans?

FK: None. Yeah. They didn't mention it at all. Yeah.

RM: As somebody who was born in Manzanar, when did you first realize what that place was, and what that meant?

FK: Well, I realized what it was back, not quite when I was going to kindergarten. But my mom certainly, she talked about it a lot. So I knew what that was. The first time I heard it mentioned in public was in 1969 or '70 when, you know, the Black Power Movement had started and then there was, sort of, ethnic power movements. And so at Cal, a Japanese American professor gave a talk about the camps. And I went to that. And it was really a moving experience to hear it talked about in public.

RM: Yeah. After decades of silence.

FK: Yeah. And then the next time I heard about it was – I mean, there may have been small mentions of it, but I remember the hearings for the redress movement.[51] And I remember going to one of those in San Francisco and listening to the testimony.

[51] The Redress Movement refers to efforts to obtain the restitution of civil rights, an apology, and/or monetary compensation from the U.S. government during the six decades that followed the World War II mass removal and confinement of Japanese Americans. Early campaigns emphasized the violation of constitutional rights, lost property, and the repeal of anti-Japanese legislation. 1960s activists linked the wartime detention camps to contemporary racist and colonial policies. In the late 1970s three organizations pursued redress in court and in Congress, culminating in the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, providing a national apology and individual payments of $20,000 to surviving detainees. Alice Yang. "Redress movement," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Redress%20movement (accessed Apr 21 2021).

RM: What was that like?

FK: It was real emotional. Yeah. It's funny because I don't think of myself as being that, you know, moved. I wasn't hurt myself by it. But it, I guess, does bring up a lot of things.

RM: Yeah.

FK: Yeah. In fact, I didn't want to go back to Manzanar for a long time, even after it became a national monument. I was just afraid that the memory was going to be too hard. But I was glad I went once I did go.

RM: Yeah. We're glad you did too.

FK: Yeah, yeah.

RM: You said that your aunt Michiko was, that she expressed the injustice of what had happened. What did that look like? How did she express it?

FK: Well, I remember her talking about how it was Roosevelt that had ordered the evacuation. And so it was, kind of like, you shouldn't trust anybody ever because even Roosevelt did that. And she would just complain more about the conditions that, you know, and the food. And I think she was a nurse at the hospital, or a nurse's aid because she wasn't actually trained to be a nurse, but. And she would complain about the low salaries that everyone got there. Yeah. So it seemed like she was more – well, you know, she was probably bitter anyway. She wasn't married when they went there and she was in her 30s.

RM: Yeah.

FK: Or right about – yeah, 30s.

RM: How did your parents react to, and your aunt as well, to the redress movement? What did they think about it?

FK: I think that they seemed to feel that it was deserved. You know, that they deserved to get that. That it wasn't enough. But thank God they did something. They were certainly, you know, they were appreciative of it. But it was more the thought than the money. The thought – I remember – no, I guess I don't. No, I do remember. Because I think my dad, he didn't get the check. But I think he did – he was still alive when Reagan sent that apology letter. Because I seem to recall him looking at that, and –

RM: But he passed away before the $20,000 –

FK: Yeah. It came just a few weeks after he passed away.[52]

RM: Wow.

FK: Yeah.

RM: Did either of them attend any of the hearings?[53]

FK: No.

RM: Okay. And you said a few times that your father just didn't talk about Manzanar and that you felt like it had a big impact on him. Was there any point when he did start talking about it?

FK: I think the most he did was when Lourdes, my daughter, interviewed him, which was just shortly before he died. He talked about that museum. But before that, I think he was kind of ashamed of the museum because he knew it wasn't like a world class museum or anything. You know. So I mean, at that time, you didn't have museums that were more

[52] LN: "50 days after he died the check arrived."
[53] The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians was established in 1980, this bipartisan federal commission was directed by Congress to review the facts and circumstances surrounding Executive Order 9066 and its impact on American citizens and permanent resident aliens as well as Alaskan natives in the Pribilof and Aleutian Islands. To arrive at its findings, the nine-member federally appointed body held hearings in major U.S. cities and heard testimonies from more than 750 witnesses. Sharon Yamato. "Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Commission%20on%20Wartime%20Relocation%20and%20Internment%20of%20Civilians (accessed Apr 21 2021).

oriented to the people. It was more like, museums kept all those precious items from long ago. You know? And he knew he didn't have any of those things in the museum.

RM: Yeah. And today it's like, such a ground-breaking idea to orient it towards the people who needed it.

FK: Yeah.

RM: I wish I could tell him how important that was and continues to be. I know you have children because the whole reason I know you is because I met your daughter, Lourdes through Instagram, of all things. Could you just tell me a little bit about your kids and – ?

FK: Yeah. I have two daughters. Lourdes is the older one. She was born in 1967. And Alyssa was the younger. She was born in '69. They're *hapa*, half Japanese and half white. And it's interesting. My first husband and I moved up here to Berkeley because their schools were integrating. And we thought that was such a good idea. And you know, we thought Berkeley would be open to, you know, to all races, which it was. But I think it was because I didn't quite, hadn't processed the whole camp experience. I didn't hear about it until after Alyssa was born, being spoken about in public.

And I wanted my daughters not to have any issues about being Japanese. Which, I probably did the wrong thing. But so, I didn't really talk about race. I just wanted them to assume they belonged. And what race they were wasn't important. And whether it was because of how they looked, or their names, or whatever, they never seemed to have had any issues about it. And in fact, well, Lourdes did want to learn Japanese when she was in grammar school. And they went to Japanese school for a while at the Oakland Buddhist Church. But it didn't last too long because we didn't speak Japanese at home, so it was hard for

them to learn it. Most of the other kids were from homes where they spoke some Japanese. But other than that, they didn't really seem to be interested in Japanese culture or anything until about when my dad passed away.

You know, and Lourdes had this family history assignment in high school. So she had to get, you know, the story of the family and everything. And then after that, slowly, her interest started to grow. Alyssa still isn't at all interested. And I don't know even how much she knows about the camps. But Lourdes is really interested. And she was especially interested in my dad because of the fact that he had lived in Chicago. You know, and she's in Chicago now. Yeah. So it's really great because she's given some talks about the interment and. Yeah. It's great.

RM: When was the first time you talked to them about what your family went through? Was it after that interview with your dad? Or had you already, sort of, told them about the family's history?

FK: I'm sure I had told them about it. I mean, and a lot of things about the family history, they'd certainly heard about. Yeah. But we just didn't make a big deal about, you know, because I didn't want it to be like, a big burden or a scar that they would carry with them. And I don't know, like I say, that might have been the wrong thing to do. Maybe I should have really instilled more, you know, pride in being Japanese and all that. But at the time, that wasn't what I thought was right.

RM: Did you ever attend any of the pilgrimages? I know you said that it was hard for you to want to go back to Manzanar.

FK: Well, the first time I went to Manzanar, it was at a pilgrimage.[54] And I was glad I did go at a pilgrimage because it's a different experience when you go there because there's so many people there who have a connection to the camps. And that made it a more positive experience for me. Yeah. And then I think I've gone to one other, or maybe two other pilgrimages since then, yeah, to Manzanar.

RM: I know that just, gosh, last month, when you were there, one of my colleagues walked you out to where your barracks was.

FK: Yeah.

RM: What was that like to find and stand on that exact location where you lived as a baby and where your family had been incarcerated?

FK: Yeah. It was just really hard to believe. That they were there. You know? And I was thinking this about that, Manzanar too. I love all the things that have been done to show what life was like back then. But in some ways, it also kind of makes it seem like it was okay. And it was almost more moving, I think, when it was just barren and there was nothing left of it. Although, you couldn't tell the stories as well. I mean, I think it's wonderful to be able to tell all the stories of it. But in some ways now, the experience is the interpretive center and the barracks that have been re-made rather than the original experience. You know how that can become that way?

RM: Yeah. The emptiness isn't as obvious anymore, and the emotion that comes with it.

FK: Yeah.

RM: It's very interesting. Yeah. Whitney, do you have questions that have come up?

WP: I have one question going way back.

[54] The Manzanar Pilgrimage is an annual pilgrimage organized by the Manzanar Committee since 1969.

FK: Hm-hmm [affirmative].

WP: So you had mentioned like, your sister was impacted by always moving, or the transitions.

FK: Yeah.

WP: I was curious about this specific transition from Manzanar to being outside of the camp. And if your family ever talked about that specific transition, what that was like?

FK: You know, they didn't. I guess they were so unemotional about so many things. Yeah. I don't remember them saying anything about that.

RM: Could you tell us about the rest of your parents' lives, what that was like?

FK: Afterwards? Well, my dad was a gardener for five years. And then about in 1955 or so, he started a nursery. And he did that for about five years. And then he was working seven days a week at that. My mom would work six days a week at the yarn store. And then on the seventh day, on Sunday, she would go and help him at the nursery. I mean, it was a pretty hard life. And they were now, you know, in their 50s. My dad was about to turn 60.

The man who ran the chain of yarn stores was really good to my mother. And he worried about my dad continuing to do that kind of work. And he found this picture frame store in Downtown LA, which was not like the budget picture frame places now. But it was one of those that would make the molding and the, do the gold gilt stuff to put on the frames. And he thought that would be a good business for my dad because it would, kind of, bring him back to the art world and all. And so he talked my dad into going into that. And I think he helped him too, financially, a little bit. And so, in 1960, when my dad was 60, he started running this picture frame store. And he did that until he was 80 years old.

RM: Wow.

FK: Yeah. And, yeah. And then he retired. You know, he lived another 10 years. And just, kind of, relaxed, finally. Yeah.

RM: Was that picture frame store able to reconnect him with the art world that he had loved, or do you know if it did that?[55]

FK: It did somewhat, you know, because he could talk with the customers who came in about what they brought in and what would look good with their piece of art and all. And then in the '60s, yeah, after he started that frame store, he met two people who I think had an impact on his life. One was this Zen monk, came from Japan to start practicing here. And he served as the translator for the monk for several years. So when the monk used to give talks in public and stuff, he would translate for him. And then at the meditation centers also, he would translate. So that was good. And that also made my dad get into Zen meditation. And I think it helped calm him down a little bit so that he could, sort of, put that whole camp experience more into perspective.

And then he also met this man who was really interesting, a little bit strange, named Manly Hall who was with the Philosophical Research Society. Have you heard of that? That was, sort of a semi-religious movement that started in the early 1900's in LA, I believe. And they were, at that time, in the early 1900's, into Indian gurus and this, kind of, sort of, very esoteric quasi religious stuff. Well, this Manly Hall had a following of a number of wealthy elderly women from Pasadena or something. And he used to give talks on philosophy and Egyptian history and all this stuff. And my dad, I think through the frame shop, through

[55] LN: "The frame store was Aberdeen Frame Company in Los Angeles."

doing some frames for him, became really good friends with him. And it was so interesting because he and my mom would go over to dinner with this man and his wife. And they were one of the better friends of my parents during the last 20 years or so. But otherwise, the guy would seem a little bit on the strange side.

RM: That's really amazing that your dad became friends with a theofascist. Yeah. Wow. And how about the rest of your mom's life after that yarn store, or yarn agency?

FK: Yeah. She worked there until she was about 79. And then she fell. She broke her hip. And she had to stop working. And, yeah. She died just a couple of years later. Yeah.

RM: Have we missed anything? I just have a couple of more questions. But is there anything that you want your great-great-great-great-great grandkids to know about you –

FK: Oh, gosh.

RM: – that we haven't asked?

FK: I can't think of anything.

RM: I'm wondering, you know, as somebody who was born in Manzanar, how do you think that Manzanar, if it has affected your own life?

FK: Well, it certainly has made me conscious of racism and civil liberties and what the government can do and all that. You know, I think it definitely influenced me towards being more liberal politically and all. That whole experience though, I think it was really so hard on the Japanese, I mean, including me who came later, in that it just made you feel like you were in this group that was outside. You know, that was not supposed to be part of the country, and all of that. The whole idea of separateness and everything. I think it really influenced the Japanese community and me, you know, a lot.

I'm in this group of *Sansei*, third generation Japanese Americans. And just about everybody in that group has been to therapy. And I was kind of lucky because my mom would talk to me about the camp. But most of them, well, their parent were *Nisei*. You know, my mom was *Nisei*, but my father was *Issei*. But I think for their parents, it may have been even more embarrassing or whatever. They didn't talk to their kids about the camps. So a lot of them only heard about it the first time around the time that I heard it talked about in public for the first time. But I had been hearing about it for a long time. So they were so shocked when they heard about it. And yeah, it was very, very hard. I hope it gets better. You know, really.

At least, for a while, it seemed like the Japanese, especially the *Sansei*, now that they had learned about it, that they were so inwardly focused on all the bad things that happened to the Japanese, it seemed like they couldn't think outwardly to help other people. But I think we are starting to do that now with, especially after 9/11 to reach out to the Muslim community. And then recently at the border, you know, there have been Japanese who have gone down there to protest against those detention centers. So I think that's really good.

And then, well, the other thing that I think has really impacted us is the fact that even though it was bad, it really brought the Japanese community together so that they do have something in common that happened to them. Otherwise, I think the community might have just, you know, dissipated. But now there is still that. And they can build on that.

Maybe it's, kind of like the Jews, that they still have all the historic events that happened to them that still, sort of, holds them together. So there was that. Yeah.

RM: I only have one more question for you.

FK: Okay, sure.

RM: Do you have any questions, Whitney? Okay. So we see anywhere between 100,000 and 115,000 people a year at Manzanar. And we try to talk to all of them.

FK: Wow.

RM: What lesson do you hope somebody takes with them when they visit Manzanar, when they learn this history? What lesson do you hope that they leave with and hold onto?

FK: Well, I think a couple of lessons. I mean, one is like, what I said about the impact on made to be more aware of racism and how the government can take away your civil liberties. But I hope the other thing is that they sort of see through all of the work that you guys have done, that just, that, you know, whether it's Japanese or anybody, that we're all, kind of, alike. And we still try to establish community. We try to educate our children and all of those things. So I hope all of the information about the daily lives of the people and what they did in camp and all, sort of, helps to make people see, well, they weren't, these people weren't these strange people that had these weird customs and they, you know, they should have been segregated, something like that. I hope it helps them to see that they were just normal everyday people. Yeah.

RM: Okay. Well, thank you very, very much. It's been my pleasure to hear your family history, and also your insights. And I'm so glad I met Lourdes and she, you know, introduced me to you. And just thank you so much, not only for this interview, but also for all the things

you've donated to help us understand the Visual Education Museum better and your father better. And we really appreciate it.

FK: Oh. Oh, we're glad to do it.

RM: And I guess we will end the tape.

FK: Okay.

[End of audio]